

## **MMS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ONGOING STUDIES**

**MMS OCS Region:** Atlantic Region

**Title:** Evaluation of Visual Impacts on Historic Properties (GM-08-10)

**Planning Areas:** North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Florida Straits

**Total Cost:** \$299,628.00

**Period of Performance:** FY 2008 - 2010

**Conducting Organization:** John Milner Associates, Inc.

**MMS Contact:** [Dr. Christopher E. Horrell](#)

### **Description:**

Background: The Minerals Management Service (MMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is charged with the responsibility of considering the effects of its actions on significant cultural resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the United States, from State waters to the limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone. This program arose out of a variety of legislation enacted to ensure proper management and protection of the nation's cultural heritage. The most pertinent of these laws are the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) of 1978.

While impacts to cultural resources on the OCS have traditionally been the purview of the MMS, other potential impacts to archaeological resources and properties are also of great concern, especially as alternative energy becomes a reality. One of the most important concerns with the development of offshore wind facilities is the visual impacts these installations will have on-shore, both from the structures and the lighting, on archaeological resources and properties listed on, or potentially eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places. These properties include historic structures, historic archaeological sites, and prehistoric archaeological sites. Our coastlines are lined with many historic properties that potentially could be impacted visually. The determination of whether a property may be adversely impacted is a requirement of Section 106 of the NHPA. The basis for making the determination of whether a property is adversely impacted depends upon the description within the property listing. If within the description the rationale for listing the property or its potential eligibility includes the visual aspects of its surroundings, then the property may be adversely impacted by visual disruption.

Additionally, analyses under NEPA will be made as to whether visual impacts could affect the revenue from the property. In particular where a property is open to the public for a fee, a concern is whether visitation of the property would be affected by an altered visual experience. The first step in making this evaluation is to determine which properties are open to the public and what level visitation occurs.

Objectives: Identify those properties that could be adversely impacted by alteration of the view of the ocean and to identify which properties are open to the public and generate

revenue.

Methods: Collect information from each State along the eastern seaboard for every historic property that could be visually impacted by offshore development. With this information, create a searchable web-based database with the appropriate information to make Section 106 determinations.

Products: A GIS database and final report.

Importance to MMS: This study will aid in planning purposes for alternative energy development in the Atlantic Region.

**Current Status:** Awarded and in progress.

**Final Report Due:** July 2010

**Publications:** None

**Affiliated WWW Sites:** None

**Revised date:** March 2010

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